



March 2008

THE RIGHTS STUFF

A Publication of The Mental Health Rights Coalition

Our Mission: To encourage, enable and empower the voice and participation of consumers in the Mental Health System in Hamilton.

Drop In and Peer Support

Hours:

11a.m- 4p.m,

Mon - Fri

Police Checks for Mental Health – Questioning the Solution

Comment by Peggy Guiler-Delahunt

The Ontario Human Rights Commission has issued a draft policy on Mental Health Discrimination and Police Records Checks and will accept submissions until Friday, March 28, 2008.

In a February 20 article in thestar.com Carol Goar states “the commission struck a fair balance” but many in the mental health sector might argue the document is lip service to a

monumental problem.

The issue is about the information provided in police checks for work places and for volunteer positions. While the information does not appear in all areas, many police checks reveal not only criminal activity but police contact which may include “psychotic” episodes where police were called or suicide attempts where ambulance and subsequently the police responded to help. This means that someone who

has had their psychiatric illness under control for years suddenly finds they cannot get a job because the information shows up on a police check. Another example is someone who once attempted suicide and the family called for help may not get a volunteer position because they could be considered a risk to the vulnerable population they are working with.

Potential employers and

(Continued on page 5)

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Watch out for “Phising” -

It’s not something you put on the wall before wallpapering

Email fraud is rampant and is costing consumers and corporations billions of dollars. One of the methods for email fraud has recently been encountered at Mental Health Rights Coalition. Someone is doing what is called phising, and trying to get sensitive information from our staff about the passwords which allow us to use our computer system.

The emails came to the coalition with some rather formal language about them doing a system check on our phone and email service. It

had the name of our service provider on it. It asked for our passwords for the system so they could make adjustments which might need to be made.

Luckily none of the staff responded to the email. We did however contact our service provider and let them know this was happening.

If anyone is making an attempt at phising on your computer or over the phone you will note they are trying to get information like passwords which would allow them access to your computer or to bank accounts. This information should never be shared with anyone. The only people who really need to know this information already know it.

It is important to keep your personal information personal.

No government agency or individual will ask you for sensitive information so be assured that no matter what the caller or emailer is saying they do not need that information.

If you are not sure about someone who has contacted you trying to get information simply contact the organization they say they are representing. You should get the number from the phone book, information or from the official web site.

Views and opinions expressed in this newsletter represent those of individual contributors, and not necessarily of The Mental Health Rights Coalition.

If you would prefer to receive an email copy of this newsletter please notify the editor at mhrcprograms@bellnet.ca

Deb Sherman: Executive Director

mhrced@bellnet.ca

Okay, so my hopes about Wiarthon Willie in the last newsletter appear to have been dashed. I can't remember a year with so much white stuff and so many cold alerts. We have needed to use our heaters here at MHRC far more than we hoped, and when the hydro bill comes I'll probably need a few thousand volts just to restart my heart.

February has been a busy month, with a lot of travelling for some of us. Your President, Herman W, attended a session at the Oak Centre in Welland where the Ministry of Health was training people to use the new common assessment tool which will be used by all mental health programs. Herman participated in role plays in order to help the trainees learn how to ask questions in a way that is comfortable and respectful. That same day, I got called to go in the opposite direction to Toronto, to join a Ministry sponsored meeting with Patrick Dion from Canada's new Mental Health Commission. There was some great discussion about stigma and about knowledge exchange planning.

Peer Support Coordinator:

Amy Rogers

peersupport@bellnet.ca

Thank you to those who made it out in the snow storm to the Crisis Refresher Training. It was a successful day and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. We covered a lot of material and hopefully everyone who participated feels more prepared to provide peer support during a crisis situation.

The Crisis Refresher Training is one example of the ongoing training offered to graduates of the Peer Support Training course. These ongoing training sessions are an example of how you can improve

I also attended in Toronto, a meeting of "the Partnership" of provincial mental health organizations, and a two day meeting of the LHIN CSI Network Leads.

Peg is just back from a trip up north, where she had a prior engagement to provide peer training to a group of CSI workers and volunteers.

I am also getting involved in a new provincial committee called "CSI Builder" which will inform the Ministry how organizations like MHRC enhance mental health services, what some of our challenges are, and how we can be strengthened.

Closer to home, I gave a presentation to the Hamilton Police Service's latest class of trainees for the Crisis Intervention Team and had a great discussion with them. Since then, that group of officers fundraised for us by having a 'dress-down' day. Their donation will top up our party fund.

By the time you receive this Amy will have held a special extra training day for the peer workers and grads around responding to members in crisis.

your skills as a Peer Supporter. Stay tuned to the newsletter for upcoming sessions! If you have an idea of a topic you would like additional training on, please let Amy know. I'll see what I can do to accommodate your ideas.

There will be a Peer Support Worker meeting on **Friday, March 14 at 1pm**. All Peer Workers are expected to attend. Please talk to Amy if you are unable to make it.

What with quarterly reporting to the Ministry, the LHIN and T4's, and staff comings and goings, we have managed to keep the bookkeeper Barb pretty busy this month as well.

We welcome a new Board member to our ranks! Margaret B is a member of Peer Services at St Joseph's mountain site, and a graduate of our peer support training course. As she is appointed by the Board, Marg will need to be confirmed by the membership in the election at our next Annual General Meeting. Marg will introduce herself better when her turn comes up in the Rights Stuff board profile column.

Thanks to staff member Mark S for donating a number of videos to our drop-in - especially the collection of the Mr Bean TV series. Our friend Donna laughed so hard all afternoon I was afraid we'd have to carry her home. Come on in and enjoy, what a great way to forget what's going on outside!



Just so you know...if I see my shadow it's six more weeks of winter. If I don't it's only a month and a half.

Matches Available

Any consumer looking for on-going peer support by a trained volunteer is encouraged to call the Peer Support Coordinator, Amy Rogers, at
905-545-2525.

Administrative Assistant Peggy Guiler-Delahunt

m h r c p r o g r a m s @ b e l l n e t . c a

Let me first thank all of the members and the staff at Mental Health Rights Coalition for welcoming me to this great place. I also thank all the service providers who are used to corresponding with Kate for taking time to introduce themselves to me via email. I look forward to meeting those I do not already know in person.

The learning curve continues but at least now a few of the faces and names are more familiar and I don't panic when the buzzer on the alarm starts to ring. Some days I just wish I could camp here for a week or two and really get an understanding of what goes on. There is a lot happening around the coalition and not having the advantage of history it's taking a while to learn it all.

As Deb mentioned I was doing some training in North Bay this month which also took a chunk of my month but what a wonderful experience. It reignited some of my old passion for training and facilitating. The group from NEON—North Eastern Ontario Network—are great fun and it was a great privilege to share with them for a few days. We all learned a great deal.

This winter has been a challenge with travel from Port Dover every day but the drive is becoming easier. Thank goodness for CBC. At least I feel like I'm doing something valuable while I travel. I will have to learn to resist the urge for retail therapy on the way home at night.

Life in the city is very different for consumer survivor initiatives and I am having to adjust my thinking a bit. In rural areas, where I have experience, we are pretty much the only show in town. There aren't the same quantity of extra services available. Here there are many health providers as well as many organizations and community groups who provide a variety of help to mental health consumers and to other minority

groups. What the CSI I came from does is a lot more intensive programming and peer support. Here much of that service is offered by other agencies. You can even find lots of places for free meals in the city so there isn't the same need for meal preparation.

Once I get more used to the job I think I will have to have the members start taking me on short tours to other agencies so I know what they are talking about.

Someone is also going to have to teach me how to use the bus system. I have never used a Hamilton bus and it's been years since I was on any sort of bus. They don't exist in rural Ontario.

Besides working at the Coalition I am also privileged to work with Good Shepherd HOMES. Between the two workplaces I am getting a crash course in how the city works.

I want to invite members and friends of Mental Health Rights Coalition to correspond with us about this newsletter with ideas that you have for articles, information about events of interest and with your opinions.

This coming month I look forward to meeting with the VOICE's of experience steering committee and learning about the work they do.

Because I grew up in Port Dover and had a mother who was from Hagersville I have always travelled to Hamilton a great deal and thought it would be a great city to be a part of. I was right. It is a great city. This is a city that truly cares and it is wonderful to be part of it.



STANDING & AD HOC COMMITTEES

Development: R. Garside, Chair

Finance: Sharon Richards

Education: Staff Facilitated

Newsletter: Staff Facilitated

SCOPE: Staff Facilitated

Note: standing committees can include voting members who are not on the board. If you are considering running for the Board of Directors, your participation on a standing committee would demonstrate your commitment and give you some experience!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President
Herman Westerik

Vice President
Rosemary Garside

Secretary
Jennifer Armstrong

Treasurer
Sharon Richards

Members at large
Margaret Bennett

Membership Renewal Form

*Please Note: if you fill in your phone number and/or email, address, we will assume it is ok for us to contact you to give notice of important events or meetings.

Do you live, work or receive services within LHIN 4? YES NO

Please Print

Today's Date: _____

Name _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Postal Code: _____

*Phone: _____

Birth Date: _____

Email: _____

Please Check One:

- I am a consumer/survivor (full privileges)
- I am not a consumer/survivor (Limited privileges, and news letter by email only)

Journey to Wellness

The Mental Health Rights Coalition is privileged to have some part in the recovery of mental health consumer/survivors in the Hamilton area. This periodic feature of our newsletter will highlight those journeys to wellness in the words of the travelers.

Hi my name is Jennifer. I'm sure that most of you know me by way of MHRC and or the work I do at St. Joseph's Mountain Health Centre. I am going to tell you a bit about myself. I am a registered Nurse in Ontario. I worked as a nurse for several years. I love nursing but I became ill and that ended my career.

However, I am very happy doing what I do now. I am lucky because I went up to St. Joseph's Health Centre and met Fiona Wilson and Rosemary Garside. These two ladies gave me the opportunity to feel good about myself again after a long struggle with depression.

My self-esteem is gradually coming back, and that is because of these two women! Rosemary encouraged me to look farther ahead and told me about the Peer Support training offered a MHRC.

I have to say that I was extremely nervous when I went to meet with Amy Rogers. Amy is the Peer Support Training instructor. Amy made me feel at ease and I thought what a nice rapport she has with people. I started to realize that I could have a new future doing Peer Support.

Meanwhile, up at the hospital I met another person who is instrumental in my recovery, Mike Dusko. You know Mike, the funny down to earth guy with an engaging personality. We started doing coffee time together at the hospital. I came to really look forward to every Wednesday morning, when I would arrive at

the hospital and the people there were patiently waiting for me and Mike.

The consumers that I have met have been inspiring. They have so much strength and insight into their lives that it makes it so interesting to talk with them. Everybody's story is different and they have all impacted on my own recovery.

After I finished the Peer Support Training, I decided that I would like to go further with Peer Support. The Coalition offered my position at the drop-in centre every Tuesday.

My life has changed for the better. It feels good to give back to the community. I do my best to support the members in any way that I can. I don't know if they feel the same but I know that I certainly have a new outlook on life.

Presently, I have a very nice lady that I am matched up with and not only is she special but she gives me inspiration to continue on with Peer Support. I am also on the Peer Recovery Network and on the Peer Support Council at St. Joe's and I am the Secretary on the Executive at Mental Health Rights Coalition. I am also taking the Psychosocial Rehabilitation course through Mohawk College. I would like to go on with this course and eventually work as a Psychosocial Rehabilitation Counselor. I am an avid reader and am always trying to improve my skills in life. I have had a long journey with my illness but I am on the path to recovery. Jennifer

Police Checks for Mental Health – Questioning the Solution

(Continued from page 1)

volunteer groups believe they have a right to this information because they work with “vulnerable populations” who could suffer at the hands of those who may be potentially dangerous to themselves or others.

The draft document clearly points out the determination of eligibility for a job should not be “based on improper assumptions about mental health” but it provides no solution to the widespread ignorance about mental health which many consumer organization call “discrimination.”

The Psychiatric Patient Advocates office is planning a statement to the commission but David

Simpson, Program Manager for the PPAO was not able to state what that would be at press time.

In her article Goar states “for psychiatric survivors who have been stopped in their tracks by the disclosure of a long-forgotten nervous breakdown or a relative’s well meaning call for assistance—this a breakthrough.

Goar also points out the draft states “the disclosure of information by a police force may be a violation of the (Human Rights) code if it goes beyond the bona fide criminal record of an individual or what is reasonably required to assess the safety risk an individual could pose. It also details tips for police forces and employers about

weighing rights and responsibilities carefully when screening applicants.

What Goar doesn’t point out is that this could send mental health back into it’s darker ages. Those with mental illness or their families may once again want to hide that illness rather than seeking early intervention and treatment.

The possibility of having to have a police check for jobs and volunteer positions could also prevent those with mental illness from applying for better paying jobs or for community work. In a system which has worked very hard over the past few years to make sure mental health consumers can work and volunteer without losing their income or benefits the policy of providing mental health

information to employers seems to be a backward step.

The true vulnerable population in this venture is Mental Health Consumers. It has been proven repeatedly that those with mental illness are more likely to have a crime committed against them than they are to commit a crime and so it would be true again if an employer denied work because of a police report which identified a mental health issue. There are few employers who would say outright they were denying the work because of the police report but even if they did there are not many consumers with the funds or the stamina to bother taking the issue to the supreme court.

Consumer Conference with Pat Capponi

The Hamilton Peer Recovery Network will be hosting a conference for consumer/survivors on **April 23, 2008**. The Hamilton Peer Recovery Network is a grassroots movement of consumer/survivors working with the local mental health and addictions system to become more recovery-oriented. Come hear **Pat Capponi**, author and activist, speak about the importance of grassroots movements and how **you can create change**.

The Hamilton Peer Recovery Network has identified five key priorities that our system needs to adopt in order for it to become more recovery-oriented. This is **your chance** to learn about our priorities and provide feedback; endorse our priorities if you are in agreement; suggest new priorities that are important to you; and learn how you can become involved and make a difference in your community.

This conference is **free of charge and for consumer/survivors only**. Lunch will be provided and there will be door prizes available; however, you must be present to win! There is limited seating, so please register early.

The Rights Stuff

The Hamilton Peer Recovery Network

Presents

You Can Create Change

A conference exclusively for Hamilton mental health consumer/survivors

With guest speaker

Pat Capponi

Wednesday, April 23, 2008

10 –3

Liuna Station

360 James St. N.

Hamilton, ON

Free for Mental Health Consumer/Survivors

Lunch provided

Door prizes

Seating is limited

Register at Mental Health Rights Coalition

905-545-2525

Free Income Tax Clinics

There are a variety of Free clinics available for those who need help with their income tax. They have many different times and locations. A list is posted at the Coalition.

There are some which require an appointment and some which don't.

There are membership limits for some clinics.

If you or someone you know needs help figuring out the list we would be happy to assist.

Call us at 905-545-2525

Don't Go Off Antidepressants

Pharmacists and doctors are warning people who take antidepressants not to go off their medication after news of a British study which claims many of these drugs may do as much as taking a placebo (sugar pill). The medical professionals note that going off any medication could have serious side effects which may cause a worsening of symptoms or withdrawal type symptoms. If you are considering going off an antidepressant or any other prescribed medication you should never do so without consulting with your physician

For more information about the study consult your local newspapers or go to CBC News at :

<http://www.cbc.ca/health/story/2008/02/26/antidepressant-study.html>

REMINDER

If there is inclement weather in the winter months, MHRC may close the drop in for safety of members and staff.

If you think the drop-in may be closed because of bad weather, CALL before you try to come. If we are closed, the greeting on the answering machine will inform you not to come to the drop-in.

Mental Health Rights Coalition Main Phone Number:

905-545-2525

Quick tax tips

from our in house financial expert Barbara Moore

- ◆ Don't hurry to get your taxes done until about the 7th of March because some people may not have sent your tax forms yet. They don't have to be issued until March 31 and some places wait until the last minute.
- ◆ Make sure you have all your papers together before going to get your taxes done. You will need T4's T5s (investment earnings). Also take rent receipts and receipts from monthly bus passes.
- ◆ There are places to get your taxes done for free. See the note above.

FOR SUPPORT...



Give Us A Call! A Peer Support Worker is available Monday to Friday, 11a.m.-4p.m.

York University Study Looks for Women With Depression

Mental Health Rights Coalition is helping facilitate a study by York University—described in detail at the right— by sending information in the newsletter and by opening our facility for interviews on March 19th.

The study is seeking women who have been diagnosed with a major depression and are willing to discuss their experience with the health care system. They must also be Canadian citizens and live in Ontario.

Note that a stipend of \$20 plus any transportation costs will be provided for participants.

For arrangements you can contact Alison Jenkins at the address to the left.

If you are attending an interview at Mental Health Rights Coalition on the 19th of March please make arrangements ahead of time with Ms. Jenkins and note our address on the front page of the newsletter. .



York University, Department of Sociology
Study on Health Care Coverage and Women's Strategies for Coping with Depression

CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS

This study investigates how health care coverage in Ontario affects women's strategies for coping with depression. It aims to learn about the experiences of women who rely on public health care coverage and the experiences of women who use forms of private health insurance.

We are currently seeking to interview women who:

- have been diagnosed with major depression
- are Canadian citizens
- live in Ontario
- are willing to discuss their experiences with the health care system.

Your interview will be confidential. It will be conducted in Hamilton at a location of your choosing accessible by public transport. A stipend of \$20.00 and travel expenses will be provided.

To participate in this study please contact:

Principle Investigator: Alison Jenkins

Department of Sociology, York University
ajenkins@yorku.ca
(289) 396-1045 (Hamilton)

DEADLINE: March 30, 2008

This study has been approved
by the Office of Research Ethics at York University.




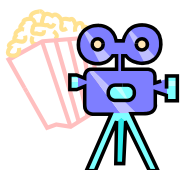













March 2008



Spring is around the corner—If you see it before we do
please invite it to join us.



Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<p>3</p> <p>1 p.m. Zilch Dice</p> 	<p>4</p> <p>1 p.m. Decorate for the month—Easter and St. Patrick's Day</p> <p>Board Meeting</p> <p>6 p.m. at Rosemary's</p>	<p>5</p> <p>1 p.m. Cribbage</p> <p>Learn to play if you don't know how</p> <p>Theatre Sign up</p> <p>1-4 Peer Training</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Mr. Bean Day</p> <p>Bean Movie Marathon and other nonsense</p> 	<p>7</p> <p>1 p.m. Movie</p> <p>Aliens</p> <p>Draw your own Alien</p> 
<p>10</p> <p>1 p.m. Movies and Popcorn</p> 	<p>11</p> <p>1 p.m. Make Easter cards</p> 	<p>12</p>  <p>Theatre Aquarius</p> <p>High School Musical</p> <p>Sign up on March 5th</p> <p>1-4 Peer Training</p>	<p>13</p> <p>11:30 VOICE's meeting</p>  <p>1 p.m. Movies and Popcorn</p>	<p>14</p> <p>*1 p.m. Peer Support Meeting</p> <p>1 p.m. Movie</p> <p>Aliens II</p> 
<p>17</p> <p>11:30 planning meeting</p> <p>**1 p.m Green Day Party</p> <p>Wear GREEN</p> 	<p>18</p> <p>1 p.m. Easter craft</p> 	<p>19</p>  <p>1 p.m. Cribbage Tournament</p> <p>York U Study</p>	<p>20</p> <p>***Good Egg Day</p> <p>Newsletter Deadline</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Closed for Good Friday</p>
<p>24</p> <p>Closed for Easter Monday</p>	<p>25</p> <p>1 p.m. Exploring Current Events</p> <p>Bring articles of interest</p> 	<p>26</p>  <p>11 a.m. Newsletter committee meeting</p> <p>1 p.m. Zilch Dice</p> <p>1-4 Peer Training</p>	<p>27</p> <p>12</p> <p>****Note to Peer Support HPS</p> <p>Noon hour seminar</p> <p>1 p.m. Movies and Popcorn</p>	<p>28</p>  <p>11 a.m. Movie Aliens III</p> <p>1 p.m. Alien Resurrection</p> <p>*****2:30 Alien contest award</p>
<p>31</p> <p>1 Bingo</p> 	<p>*Peer Support meeting on the 14th—all Peer Support Workers should attend.</p> <p>**Green Day Party—17th—wear green and join us for some fun</p> <p>***Good Egg Day—share a story about how something has helped you to have a better life.</p> <p>****Thursday the 26th—Peer Support workers should consider attending this seminar - Assessing Suicidality</p> <p>*****Alien contest—draw an alien with Mark on Fridays. Prize for the best alien will be awarded</p>			